



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTH FLORIDA  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

INSTITUTE ON BLACK LIFE

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE



## Culture, Environment and Sustainability of African Diaspora Communities

TUESDAY  
**FEB. 5**

M S C  
**3707**

9:30 AM  
**3:30 PM**



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# Welcome!



I am delighted to be continuing the rich tradition of the Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora of hosting our annual conference during Black History Month. The conference theme this year is “Culture, Environment and Sustainability of African Diaspora Communities.” This theme aligns with the University of South Florida strategic plan with its emphasis on sustainable development and sustainable healthy communities, locally and globally, and the importance of cultural diversity.

This interdisciplinary gathering comprises scholars from a variety of disciplines including Africana Studies, Anthropology, Geosciences, and Political Science. We will explore through faculty presentations and student poster displays, topics ranging from historical legacies of economic marginalization and inequity in African Diaspora communities to community resilience and successful adaptation measures seeking to overcome structural inequalities and preserve cultural heritage and sustainability. We will present case studies from communities in the United States, Caribbean, and Latin America.

Through this important event on our calendar, and in our 33rd year, the institute remains true to its historic mission and continues to advance its major goals: To facilitate and support knowledge production—through research and scholarly exchange—on a broad range of topics relevant to the lives of African Americans, contemporary Africans and people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean; to facilitate local and global community engagement through interdisciplinary research and service projects; to support USF student retention, academic success and creativity through cultural heritage enrichment and outreach programs. Through a robust scholarship program, we offer academic and travel abroad scholarships to USF students.

We welcome you today and look forward to your continued support and participation in future events.

Sincerely,

Fenda A. Akiwumi, Ph.D.  
Director, Institute on Black Life and  
Center for Africa and the Diaspora



# **Abstract**



## ***Culture, Environment and Sustainability of African Diaspora Communities***

The preeminent historian of the African Diaspora Joseph E. Harris writes, “The African Diaspora concept subsumes the following: the global dispersion of Africans throughout history; the emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition; and the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa. Thus viewed, the African Diaspora assumes the character of a dynamic, continuous, and complex phenomenon stretching across time, geography, class and gender” (Harris, 1993, 3). Harris further emphasizes how diasporas “affect the economies, politics and social dynamics of both homeland and the host country or area” (Jalloh & Maizlish, 1996, 7). While emphasis is usually on large movements and relocations resulting in the dispersal of Africans and their descendants globally such as the involuntary migration of the transatlantic slave trade (to the United States, Caribbean, Latin America and South America), new African Diasporas have emerged globally through refugee resettlement or a quest for better economic opportunities. This annual conference of the Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora will present research focusing on culture, environment and sustainability of African Diaspora communities. Presentations will address historical legacies of economic marginalization and inequity from the slave trade and colonization, and currently from foreign direct investment in sectors such as mining, tourism and urban development. Linked to economic impacts are loss of traditional ecological livelihoods and cultural heritage of communities, and disparities in health and education which challenge cultural and environmental sustainability of communities. Notwithstanding, community resilience and adaptation measures seek to overcome structural inequalities.

# Keynote Speaker

SENATOR, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

## MYRON D. JACKSON

JOIN US FOR HIS TALK FROM 11:10 AM TO 12 PM

### In Search of Identity Projects: The Heritage and Cultural Identity of an African People in the Diaspora, Virgin Islanders

Senator Myron D. Jackson is a member of the 33rd Legislature of the USVI and Chair of the committee on Culture and Planning. Senator Jackson has dedicated his life's work to protection of the cultural resources and heritage and natural environment of the islands. Following his graduation from college as a Graphic Artist, Senator Jackson joined the Department of Conservation and Cultural Affairs and was recruited to the Planning Office which later



became the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. He has served in a variety of capacities including Graphic Artist, Senior Planner, Cultural Advisor to Governor Alexander A. Farrelly, Director of the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office and the Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute. In the 31st and 30th Legislature, Senator Jackson served as the Chair of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation. He was senate president of the 32nd legislature. Over the decades, he has researched and published widely in the area of preservation. He has received many community service awards for his commitment and dedication to the people and culture of the Virgin Islands of the United States and continues to promote cultural heritage and ecotourism.

# Schedule



## MORNING SESSION

**9:30 am** Coffee

**10:15 am** Opening Remarks

*Dr. Fenda A. Akiwumi, Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora*

**10:20 am** Welcome Remarks

*Cecil E. Howard, J.D., Associate Vice President, Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity Office, USF*

**10:30 am** Introduction/Overview Presentation

Sustainability as a Cultural Challenge

*Prof. Charles Stanish, Director, Institute for the Advanced Study of Culture and the Environment, USF*

**10:50 am** BREAK

**11:00 am** *Provost Ralph Wilcox, Welcome and Introduction of Keynote Speaker*

**11:10 am** Keynote Speaker

In Search of Identity Projects: The Heritage and Cultural Identity of an African People in the Diaspora, Virgin Islander s

*Senator Myron D. Jackson, 32nd US Virgin Islands Legislature*

**12:00 pm – 1:00 pm** LUNCH

## AFTERNOON SESSION

State of Culture, Environment and Sustainability of African Diaspora Communities

**1:00 - 1:45 pm** STUDENT POSTER SESSION

Education in Spring Hill – Sulphur Springs

*Lisa Armstrong, Department of Anthropology, USF*

Environmental Justice and Stormwater Management in Coastal African American Communities: An East Tampa Case Study

*Maya Carrasquillo, Civil and Environmental Engineering, USF*

Heritage Maintenance in an African-Indigenous Community

*Eileen Deluca, Department of Anthropology, USF*

Community Engagement in the Production and Presentation of African and Dutch Heritage in Curaçao: Museum Kura Hulanda, Willemstad, Curaçao

*April Min, JD, Department of Anthropology, USF*

## CONT.

Preparing the New Generation of Black Health Professionals: An Innovative Community-based Approach

*Darrys Reese, Department of Cell Biology, USF*

An Investigation into the Rejuvenation of the Jamaica Bauxite Industry: Social and Environmental Ramifications

*Seyena Simpson, School of Geosciences and Honors College, USF*

Informing Local Sustainability Challenges in Antigua, West Indies

*Anthony R. Tricarico, Department of Anthropology, USF*

### **1:45 pm** BREAK

### **2:00 - 2:50 pm PAPER PRESENTATIONS**

Recognition, Reparations and Political Autonomy of Black Communities in the Americas

*Prof. Bernd Rieter, Director, Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean*

Making Black Communities Matter: Social and Environmental Implications of Interstate Expansion

*Prof. Cheryl Rodriguez, Africana Studies Program, School of Interdisciplinary and Global Studies, USF*

National Parks and Communities—Engaging a Broader Audience

*Prof. Antoinette Jackson, Director, USF Heritage Research Lab, Department of Anthropology, USF*

### **2:50 pm** BREAK

### **3:00 - 3:45 pm PAPER PRESENTATIONS CONT.**

Community-Based Heritage Conservation and University- Engaged Research in a Garifuna Community in Belize

*Prof E. Christian Wells, Director, Center for Brownfields Research and Redevelopment, USF*

Somalis in Lewiston, Maine: Refugee Resettlement, New Diasporas and Livelihood Adaptation

*Prof. Fenda A. Akiwumi, Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora, USF*

*Discussant: Prof. Roy Kaplan, Africana Studies Program, School of Interdisciplinary and Global Studies, USF*

### **4:00 pm** RECEPTION (FAO 296)

### **5:00 - 6:30 pm** DOCUMENTARY FILM (FAO 296)

Paradise Discovered: The Unbreakable Virgin Islanders

*A film by Peter Bailey, Founder and CEO, NiteCap Media*

# Presentation Abstracts



## ***Recognition, Reparations and Political Autonomy of Black Communities in the Americas***

*Professor Bernd Rieter, Director, Institute for the Study of Latin America and the Caribbean, USF*

This presentation argues first that slavery was the predominant structuring force in the making of modern American reality. It proceeds by arguing that the devastating effects of slavery and colonialism cannot be addressed with the liberal democratic frameworks to which most countries of the hemisphere adhere. The only place for black communities of the Americas to prosper is within their own communities. A focus on their own community can be adopted from Native American groups who have long struggled for the political autonomy of their communities. This paper thus explores some of the Native American approaches to achieving freedom and wellbeing. It further argues that recognition and reparations are the only ways to address and correct the ills created by slavery and shows how Germany addressed the wrongs it committed against Jews and other enslaved laborers under the Nazi regime—namely by paying reparations to Israel and outlawing any glorification of racism, slavery, and hatred. As such, the German case can serve as an example on how to address the wrongs created by slavery and genocide.

## ***Making Black Communities Matter: Social and Environmental Implications of Highway Expansion***

*Cheryl R. Rodriguez, Africana Studies Program, School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies, USF*

This presentation examines the intersection of race, space and resistance as we revisit the legacies and contemporary implications of urban development policies in historically Black communities. With the understanding that spatial matters are Black matters (and Black matters are spatial matters), we argue that exploring this intersection allows us to raise questions about the differential impact of urban policies on Black communities. Against the historical backdrop of devastation and loss caused by urban renewal and highway construction in the mid-20th century, activists and residents fight current proposals for a highway



## ***Cont.***

expansion project originally called TBX. While we examine the proposed project and its implications for the entire city, we are particularly focused on responses to this project by communities we have studied for many years. This presentation explores the social and environmental implications of local interstate expansion from the perspectives of residents who will be affected on multiple levels.

## ***National Parks and Communities—Engaging a Broader Audience***

*Prof Antoinette Jackson, Director, USF Heritage Research Lab,  
Department of Anthropology, USF*

Many of the more than 400 sites in the national park system are repositories of history and heritages of people and communities – some well-known, others underrepresented – that shape the national dialog. The National Park Service has recognized the need to reach out to underrepresented communities and engage a broader audience. At the same time NPS and other public entities confront issues of inclusion and exclusion and their role in programming and representation, which has often served to complicate this objective. As a cultural anthropologist, I work with the National Park Service to involve underrepresented communities in interpretations of place. Collecting and interpreting stories about people and the many ways they inhabit places is more important than ever. This discussion highlights specific cases with an emphasis on African descendant communities and national park associations.

# **Presentation Abstracts**



## ***Community-Based Heritage Conservation and University- Engaged Research in a Garifuna Community in Belize***

*Prof. E. Christian Wells, Director, Center for Brownfields Research and Redevelopment, USF*

The southern coast of Belize is undergoing rapid, foreign-investment dominated tourism development that is unevenly distributed across the landscape of socio-economic and ethnic groups. This presentation examines the ways and extent to which tourism development both facilitates and constrains “pro-poor growth” in the predominately Garifuna village of Seine Bight, a historically marginalized community located on the Placencia Peninsula. Tourism products that showcase the country’s cultural and environmental heritage are actively encouraged and supported by a comprehensive national agenda for sustainable development. This effort, supported by the Inter-American Development Bank and other agencies, seeks to meet a number of international development goals, including poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. However, national tourism policies and programs often confront local realities that present unique challenges to development, such as limited infrastructure and loss of traditional livelihoods. Residents of Seine Bight, who aim to leverage their heritage as part of the Garifuna Diaspora, seek to overcome structural inequalities accompanying tourism development that favors neighboring communities of Kriol Belizeans and foreign expatriates. Responding to these challenges of uneven development, the presentation highlights a university-engaged partnership between the community of Seine Bight and anthropologists at the University of South Florida to promote local heritage tourism and foster cultural heritage revitalization, as determined by residents of the community. The initiative explores the challenges and opportunities involved in this undertaking to reclaim local development, specifically through the creation of a community heritage museum and collaborative heritage research, education, and outreach programs, drawing on insights from international development studies and third sector science.

## ***Somalis in Lewiston, Maine: Refugee Resettlement, New Diasporas and Livelihood Adaptation***

*Prof. Fenda A. Akiwumi, School of Geosciences, and Director, Institute on Black Life, USF*

Somalis are a part of the recent African Diaspora to North America as a result of the U.S. government's refugee resettlement programs. Resettlement policy establishes refugee communities in selected locations to facilitate easy transition and integration, especially for rural and non-Western educated refugees. This presentation discusses the cultural geography dimensions of the voluntary secondary migrations by Somalis to the Maine community of Lewiston, a small predominantly white city with seemingly few economic opportunities in the early 2000s. The project employed fundamental geographic migration concepts such as push-pull factors, economic utility, chain migration, and secondary migration to explore this movement. Fieldwork occurred in Maine using qualitative methods such as key informant and informal interviews and direct observation of changes in the cultural landscape-focusing specifically on livelihood adaptation strategies by the Somali Bantu refugees, historic sedentary subsistence farmers eager to move toward self-sufficiency. Bantus took advantage of assistance from NGOs such as the Coastal Enterprises' New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP) to establish farming cooperatives. Within the limitations of Maine's soils and climate, the Bantus grew traditional African foods for their families as well as other produce sold at local farmers markets and restaurants. Farms are a valuable transitional vehicle for the less educated, particularly Somali Bantu women in adapting to their new diaspora homes, using agricultural skills, income generation, and self-esteem building.

## ***Student Poster Abstracts***



### ***Environmental Justice and Stormwater Management in Coastal African American Communities: An East Tampa Case Study***

*Maya Carrasquillo, Civil and Environmental Engineering, USF*

African American communities experience higher incidences of health disparities due to inequitable exposures to environmental stressors. With the increase of climate threats, stormwater runoff and flooding are major concerns that can be linked to environmental injustice in African American communities. Efforts to improve stormwater management overlap with efforts to increase green space through the implementation of urban green infrastructure (UGI), as a measure to improve accessibility to green space as well as to achieve geographical and social equity. The goal of this research is to assess the spatial relationship between socio-demography and stormwater BMPs (mainly UGI) implemented throughout U.S. cities to determine the equitable distribution of green infrastructure, with a specific case study of stormwater infrastructure in East Tampa.

### ***Education in Spring Hill – Sulphur Springs***

*Lisa Armstrong, Department of Anthropology, USF*

Heritage narratives are often limited to popular court cases, socially accepted themes and people. This rhetoric creates a narrow view that silences major achievements of black people. Specifically, the “South” is known for centuries of perpetrating racial oppression against non-white people that obstructs their pathways to equality and stability. Under-representation of black heritage in scholarship and public spaces is particularly relevant in Tampa, Florida. This study of Sulphur Springs-Spring Hill Community’s heritage advances existing research and community knowledge, intersects race and gender themes, and diversifies perspectives in a museum by exploring strategies to maneuver beyond boundaries of oppression in education.

## ***Heritage Maintenance in an African-Indigenous Community***

*Eileen Deluca, Department of Anthropology, USF*

This applied anthropology project employed an ethnographic research methodology with a specific emphasis on oral history methods to support the documentation of heritage of members of an African-Indigenous community in Waspán, Nicaragua. Based on a request from former Contra combatant and leader (Laura Coleman) of the Aiklakabra Mairin (“women fighters” in Miskitu), the researcher participated in a pilot project in July 2017 to collect oral histories of former combatants who participated in the Contra War (1980-1990). At that time, 13 members of the community were interviewed. A common request among the interviewees was that they wanted the younger and future generations to recognize combatants’ participation in the Contra War and to see their stories memorialized the way other combatants’ stories have been. The project analyzed the oral history data collected in the pilot study in order to create a book of stories (curriculum material) about the former combatants, utilizing their own words. Follow-up interviews with the community will be conducted in March 2019 in order to expand the collection of stories. The project is an effort to engage in applied anthropology, to support a community and to give “voice” to narratives that have been “silenced” in official discourses, national heritage sites, and curriculum.

## ***Community Engagement in the Production and Presentation of African and Dutch Heritage in Curaçao: Museum Kura Hulanda, Willemstad, Curaçao***

*April Min, JD, Department of Anthropology, US*

Focusing on exhibitions at the Museum Kura Hulanda in Curaçao, I am exploring ways in which museums can facilitate or incorporate community engagement to rethink exhibit space, displays, and narratives. While immersed in the dynamic Curaçaoan culture during field work, I observed a disconnect between the Museum, local communities, and historic and contemporary narratives of national identity. Consultation with African and Dutch descendant communities can provide opportunities to reconstruct power dynamics in the production of narratives concerning African heritage and identify narratives that are relevant and meaningful to communities previously silenced or overlooked.

# **Student Poster Abstracts**



## ***Preparation of the New Generation of Black Health Profession: An Innovative Approach***

*Darrys Reese, Department of Cell Biology, USF*

Community-based initiatives and approaches have historically been vehicles for successful outcomes in marginalized minority communities. This presentation is a personal testimony of the positive impact of mentorship from the Brain Expansion Scholastics Program (BEST), a nonprofit founded by an African-American doctor. The organization “attempts to moderate the negative impacts of apathy and lack of available educational services on the underserved youth population of Tampa, Florida and beyond. The BEST Program has encouraged disadvantaged (at risk) youth to focus on careers in the medical profession and has provided an educational curriculum as a vehicle to empower success to these students in fulfilling their dreams” ([www.brainexpansions.org](http://www.brainexpansions.org)). Students gain first-hand experience working with medical professionals such as doctors, dentists, pharmacists and physiotherapists and nurses. A key to the program’s success is the longevity of relationships with mentees which eventually results in accountability and success at the end.

## ***An Investigation into the Rejuvenation of the Jamaica Bauxite Industry: Social and Environmental Ramifications***

*Seyena Simpson, School of Geosciences and Honors College, USF*

Since the 1940s Jamaica has had a lucrative bauxite industry. While bauxite was beneficial for the economy, it came with many social and environmental issues. The industry took a downturn in the early 2000s but has recently been rejuvenated. This study examines the recent developments within the Jamaican bauxite industry, specifically the reopening of previously shut down plants and the potential for rare earth mineral production. The study will assess the social and environmental ramifications of the revitalization and expansion for communities in the vicinity of the mines (particularly impacts on subsistence livelihoods like farming), along with government policies on these issues.

## ***Informing Local Sustainability Challenges in Antigua, West Indies***

*Anthony R. Tricarico, Department of Anthropology, USF*

Environmental challenges hindering the continued equitable development of local communities are often rooted in historical land management practices. However, sustainability initiatives have traditionally been confounded by a narrow consideration of the historical causality of contemporary environmental health challenges. This poster addresses a recent initiative in Antigua, which sought to work with community members to understand how the legacies of historic plantation farming impact farming today. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the entire island was variably dedicated to the production of sugarcane, forming a “commercial revolution” (Mintz 1985) that transformed global livelihoods. The legacy of the sugar “revolution” continues to shape the socio-ecological livelihoods of individuals through increased rates of landscape instability and soil quality loss. This research analyzed the relationship between two markers of past anthropic activity, soil quality and landscape stability, across two regions (Ayer’s Creek Basin and Indian Creek Basin) in eastern Antigua, examining the degree, extent, and timing of landscape change. Utilizing anthropological methods (semi-structured interviews) and geoarchaeological methods (soil collection and analysis, and geomorphological survey), this research investigated how the construction of the British “plantationscape” contributed to contemporary socio-ecological legacies in Antigua. A greater goal of the research sought community participation in informing future, sustainable, agricultural development practices.

The image is a movie poster for the film 'Paradise Discovered: The Unbreakable Virgin Islanders'. It features a man in silhouette standing on a balcony, looking out over a town that has been severely damaged by a hurricane. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The title 'PARADISE DISCOVERED' is written in large, white, serif capital letters at the top. Below it, the subtitle 'THE UNBREAKABLE VIRGIN ISLANDERS' is written in smaller, white, sans-serif capital letters. At the bottom right, the text 'a film by Peter Bailey' is written in a white, sans-serif font.

# PARADISE DISCOVERED

THE UNBREAKABLE VIRGIN ISLANDERS

a film by Peter Bailey

## *Synopsis*

On September 6, 2017, hurricane Irma struck the island of St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. The category 5 storm was the strongest ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. Less than two weeks later hurricane Maria, another category 5 storm, struck the already destroyed island paradise. The tragedy marked the first time in modern history that two category 5 hurricanes hit the same place in less than two weeks. Based on his New York Times Op Ed 'Has America's Forgotten the Virgin Islands', which he wrote while building a make-shift roof and living without electricity for 90 days, award-winning journalist Peter Bailey brings to life what has been called the worst natural disaster in American history.



# PETER BAILEY

**JOIN US IN THE VIEWING OF PETER'S FILM IN  
FAO 296 FROM 5 - 6:30 PM**

Peter Bailey is an award-winning author, journalist and creator of the critically-acclaimed online "NiteCap" conversation series. Before that Bailey worked as a staff writer for Time, Newsweek and The Miami Herald. The autobiography he co-authored with rap legend Trick Daddy, "Magic City: Trials of a Native Son", was praised by the New York Times.



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